

GOMA Community Resilience Working Group

Corpus Christi, TX December 11-13, 2007

Meeting Summary

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance Community Resilience Working Group held its third meeting December 11-13, 2007 in Corpus Christi, Texas. The meeting was held at the Omni Bayfront Hotel and was hosted by Texas Sea Grant. The Texas General Land Office organized a fieldtrip for attendees on the second day. This meeting focused on sharing information pertaining to existing resiliency activities in Texas and Louisiana, identifying existing and potential data sources, identifying action priorities, and pursuing further action particularly related to LiDAR collection (action item R-2.8). A reception, sponsored by the Gulf of Mexico Foundation and the Port of Corpus Christi, was held on the first evening and provided an occasion for networking.

Tuesday, December 11, 2007

The first day of the meeting began at mid-day with a welcome and introductions by the attendees. Building on ideas generated at the Biloxi meeting, attendees had some further discussion regarding the working definition of resilience and discussion of areas of special interest upon which to provide additional focus. The group agreed on the following working definition:

Resilience is the capacity of human and natural/physical systems to adapt to and recover from change.

Focus areas within the working definition include:

- *culture and heritage*
- *ecological systems*
- *economics*
- *insurance*
- *smart growth.*

Also on the first day, attendees were presented briefs regarding resiliency pilot projects getting underway in Texas and Louisiana. After attendees heard from three research teams that will be exploring indicators of resilience, the discussion led to an inventory of existing resiliency related data sources and ongoing activities. Resources like the Jefferson Parish (LA) spatial database, the established tide station data, the Resilient America webpage, and the EPA pollutant database were all brought up, while activities such as the proposed GOMA Community Resiliency Self Assessment, the Riskwise program, and the Marine Debris model were thought to be relevant and useful. Participants seconded the usefulness of such tools in that they may be beneficial in improving the capacity to quantify problems or obtain better authority for regulation. It was noted that the further development of a resiliency assessment might also provide an opportunity to incorporate “lessons learned,” involve other entities such as non-profits, and pose “what if” scenarios based on variables within a particular community.

Wednesday, December 12, 2007

The second day of the meeting continued with further presentations outlining additional efforts, data, and tools related to resiliency. (Powerpoint presentations given at the meeting are available on the resilience page of the Alliance's working website.) A list of compiled potential activities/products from previous meetings were displayed and attendees were provided the opportunity to begin "voting" on their top choices that represent what they felt to be the most important and pertinent issues in creating more resilient communities. The day was capped with an educational field trip to Mustang Island. It was here, through a series of stops, that regulatory issues related to development on or near the beach dunes were discussed. It was shown how development pressure, environmental issues, and regulatory authority are all factors in the resiliency context.

Thursday, December 13, 2007

The third and final day of this meeting began with a group discussion of Action R-2:8 (*Coordinate, as appropriate, unified five Gulf State support for the collection of comprehensive shallow water bathymetry data (e.g., LiDAR) to support improved storm surge modeling and more accurate emergency evacuation assessments.*)

Existing LiDAR related bathymetry data collection efforts offered for discussion included:

- NAVO has collected and used a lot of LiDAR
- USACE (Vicksburg) has collected extensive data
- USGS (Extreme Storms Program)/Northern Gulf of Mexico/Navy
- University of Southern Mississippi

It was felt that indeed there was not a coordinated effort of LiDAR collection gulfwide, but rather more of a piecemeal situation. There are efforts to catalog existing bathymetry data such as NOAA Coastal Services Center's plans to launch an inventory website and the National Geophysical Data Center's inventory. A need to contact the states to determine what has been done was expressed as were problematic circumstances such as lack of coverage for secondary bays/inland connected waterways/estuaries, water clarity, and transportability. Some gulfwide efforts discussed included USACE storm surge modeling and ADCIRC. V-datum was stated to be an important component of assuring gulfwide consistent accuracy standardization. Existing state efforts mentioned included USGS collecting data for Louisiana's entire coastline, Mississippi/USACE collected data for post Katrina modeling/floodzone mapping, and Florida is in the process of collecting LiDAR for their coastline.

An action item of defining what has been done or is planned for each of the Gulf States was defined and the following individuals volunteered to investigate the current status and report to John Bowie by the end of January:

- Jim Gibeaut – Texas
- Michele Deshotels – Louisiana
- Grant Larsen – Mississippi
- Tina Sanchez – Alabama
- Kevin Kirsh - Florida

These assignments will further the progress in getting on track with the LiDAR coordination action.

After the data discussion, “voting” for prioritizing activities and products was finalized. The top 7 priorities were identified and discussed, and the task of developing a one or two page write-up was assigned to interested attendees. The top priorities included:

- Revise, test, and prepare a final resiliency index – Steve Sempier will develop the write-up. SeaGrant has already begun this process and there has been discussion on possible pilot communities. This could be a tool to promote the resiliency concept to local governments and communities. LaDon and Rod will send the updated index, whereas any comments should be forwarded to LaDon. It was noted that insurance groups may be a good partner as they have already developed their own models and probably have valuable information to contribute. It was asked if the resiliency index could be merged/integrated with the Community Rating System and if that could help a communities rating or act as an incentive. Michele offered to contact the state insurance authority to request their input.
- Standardize and maintain topographic and bathymetric surveys through implementation of a High Accuracy Reference Network (HARN) across political boundaries to promote current coastal issues and facilitate LiDAR corrections. Galen Scott will develop the write-up. This would allow states to perform Real-Time Kinematic (RTK) surveys that produce data that are formalized and consistent with that produced in other states.
- Atlas or directory of Hazard/resiliency related partners, policies, and tools within the five Gulf States. Jim Weatherford will develop the write-up with the help of Tina Sanchez, Heidi Recksiek, and Tina Shumate. This action will be continued with the collection of resiliency forms the working group is developing. This action is intended to develop a knowledge of who the players are, how to bring them together, and what tools are available on the Federal, State, local, academic, NGO, and commercial level. Communication seems to be the lacking and a method to meet or common communication element (central database) is needed. Should this be a web based portal or a living document? We could improve (update) the spreadsheet on the working website or develop a web portal but attendees stated it should be categorized, with a stated purpose, and reflect the different components of emergency management. It was expressed that a needs assessment might be the way to start.
- Consider removing economic incentives (NFIP insurance, etc) for developing in high risk areas. Ralph Rayburn will develop the write-up with the help of Audra Lusher, Tina Shumate, and Michele Deshotels. Some efforts among states and local governments have taken place in this regard, such as City of Biloxi, Mississippi and State of Louisiana through LA Speaks. The thought is that the opinion is that the government will continue to provide a bail out but simply doing away with flood insurance is not a panacea. The attendees’ thoughts dealt with a study of the history of flood control, NFIP implementation, and general land use practices. Perhaps look at this topic from the perspective of affecting development practices utilizing smart growth principles and practices, incentives for projects that increase resiliency, and evolving from the status quo style of development, management, and regulation.

- Culture/Heritage/History of the Coast and the use of the Coast. Michele Deshotels will develop the write-up, with some input from Jay Ritchie. Focus on healthy communities and ecosystems as they existed versus recovery from storm events. The attendees recognized that sense of place, culture, and heritage play a major role in the resiliency of a community and that historical land use, engineering, and architecture provide valuable information for future use. Areas and cultures like the Vietnamese community of New Orleans East and the French/Slavonian populations of East Biloxi provide excellent case studies where resiliency is both embraced and demonstrated. The group felt that the way to move this action forward was to document, collect, and publicize historical/cultural information perhaps through collaboration with media such as PBS or through the development of media such as podcasts that could be utilized in a myriad of ways (such as classroom activities).
- Education/outreach for coastal communities on the importance of improving land use planning to enhance resiliency to disasters. Debbie Danford will develop the write-up. Perhaps this action would be best served to partner with the GOMA education Team. This action would involve the development of materials (fact sheets/tools, etc) demonstrate methods by which to become more resilient. Principles and practices of smart growth, implications of various land use decision scenarios, and choices in building design are but a few topics of discussion that could be put forth.
- Improve coordination and communication of coastal emergency managers, floodplain managers, and county officials to integrate pro-active resiliency and mitigation measures. Jim Weatherford will develop the write-up. It was expressed that the National Estuarine Research Reserves' Coastal Training Programs would be a great ally in this action, and Marian Dicas of Grand Bay NERR and Ros Kilcollins of Apalachicola NERR were specifically identified as individuals who could help with this item. The thought is to hold workshops, perhaps an ongoing series, that bring together officials engaged in various and varied aspects of community administration and provide them the opportunity to network and share current projects and information. This would also be an opportunity to introduce new ideas, existing tools, and alternative concepts that they would be able to implement into their particular area of responsibility. Louisiana was noted as having similar experience through LCA and might be a source of information, as are the Mississippi Charrette process and LA Speaks.

The meeting was capped by a brief from Tina Shumate about possible NOAA funding available to implement the Governors' Action Plan but with an impending timeline for submittal. The letter of intent (LOI) is due by January 10th with full proposals due by February 8th. It was decided a LOI would be drafted by Rhonda Price of Mississippi DMR with support of a subcommittee consisting of Jay Ritchie, Michele Deshotels, and Jim Weatherford. The LOI will be submitted by Tina Shumate as chair of the working group. The LOI would include a request for funding for a Resiliency Priority Issue Team (PIT) coordinator, travel costs of states' participants (2-3 per state), activities to implement the action plan, and perhaps speakers' travel costs.

Louisiana has offered to host the next meeting, tentatively scheduled for the first week in April to be held in either New Orleans or Baton Rouge. The group expressed an interest in having an associated fieldtrip at the next meeting.